



SAINT LUKE, CONFESSOR, ARCHBISHOP OF SIMFEROPOL

St. Luke was born Valentine of Felix Voino-Yassenetsky in Kertz on April 27th 1877. His mother was Orthodox, but later did not attend church, while his father, a Roman Catholic, was deeply pious and influenced Valentine very much. His faith was much influenced by both his proximity to the Holy Lavra of the Kyivan Caves (which his family lived near) and a copy of the Holy Bible he received upon graduating High School. He had a great talent for and desire to pursue art, however, his desire to do something to help the poor peasants around him was overriding, and he attended medical school in Kyiv, and graduated in 1903.

In 1904, the Russo-Japanese War brought Valentine to the Far East as a surgeon, where he met his future wife Anna Vasilievna Lanskaya. They married and had four children. During this time, as a surgeon, Valentine became specially trained in ophthalmological operations, along with regional anesthesia and the surgery of pyogenic infections (which later became areas of research for him). He also displayed immense faith in those difficult times. The family would entertain a nun from the Fiodorovski monastery once a month, and they would attend church regularly.

Valentine also refused to perform an operation without first praying before an icon of the Theotokos in the operating room, and then signing the patient with iodine in the sign of the Cross. In fact, one time the Communist Party officials removed the icon, at which point Valentine refused to return to surgery until it would be returned. Soon, the wife of one of the party officials needed an operation, and specifically requested Valentine. He, however, refused to perform the surgery until the icon of the Panagia was returned. They complied with his request, and he returned to surgery.

Valentine's wife, who came down with tuberculosis, died prematurely. Though Valentine grieved deeply for his wife, he was able to see the hand of the Lord guiding him even through this difficult time, both by Him choosing one of the nurses to help raise his children, and by calling him to the priesthood. In

obedience to Archbishop Innocent, Valentine hastily followed Christ's divine call, and was ordained a deacon on January 26th, and a priest on February 2nd, 1921. In fact, because of the need for a bishop, Fr. Valentine also obeyed the call of the people and underwent the monastic tonsure (being given the name "Luke", as he resembled the Evangelist in many ways) and was consecrated a bishop.

This period of time was extremely difficult for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as they were constantly being assaulted from the right and from the left (the atheist government and their heretical "Living Church"). Because of St. Luke's confessions of faith (and despite his immense medical and scientific achievements), he was imprisoned, tortured, and exiled for 11 years in total, to Siberia, and other treacherous locales. Besides persecution from the government, who masqueraded under the blanket of Orthodoxy and government, he had to deal with heretics "and drew people away from the Church, and schismatic individuals who also caused unneeded harm in those turbulent years.

St. Luke's virtues, struggles and achievements are staggering. As a Grace-filled hierarch of the Church, he re-opening many churches that had been closed by the Communists, produced deep theologic works, and supported the faithful while drawing many to Orthodoxy. In addition, his love, skill and devotion to his patients saved thousands, (especially injured soldiers in war), and his research techniques were award-winning, and were thought to still be recognized by his fellow surgeons fifty years later. After a lifetime of such medical accomplishments and spiritual struggles in his confession for the Faith, St. Luke reposed in the Lord as the Archbishop of Simferopol (Crimea) on June 11th (New Calendar) 1961.

St. Luke's incredible virtues, love for the Lord and his fellow men, and accomplishments helped sustain the faithful immensely in those difficult days of the Atheist state. After his death, the Communist Party sought to use propaganda and intimidation to minimize his achievements, but the overwhelming love and devotion of the faithful thwarted their plans. Whereas the funeral procession was supposed to last a few minutes without psalmody or honor, it ended up lasting hours, as the faithful planted themselves around the harse, and did not let it speed away to the cemetery. Miraculously, a huge flock of doves followed the procession from the church to the cemetery.

Later, the remains of St. Luke were disinterred, and it was found that his heart remained incorrupt. What a beautiful reminder of the never-ending love that he showed towards Christ and towards his fellow men, especially the sick and

suffering! In November of 1995, he was proclaimed a Saint by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Besides being beloved in Ukraine, St. Luke is also very well-loved in Greece. Specifically, the life of St. Luke, written by Archimandrite and Abbott of the Monastery of Sagmata, Nektarios Antonopoulos, has sold thousands of copies, and is in its 14th edition of printing. Many churches (some of them quite large) have been built in honor of St. Luke of Simferopol in Greece alone in recent years. The Monastery of Sagmata (outside of the city of Thebes in Greece) also houses relics of St. Luke, which there and everywhere continue to work many, many miracles through his intercessions.

One incredible miracle involved a young boy who was an excellent piano player. The tips of three of his fingers were cut off accidentally, and he was afraid that he would never be able to play piano again. After he and his grandmother prayed to St. Luke to help him, his fingers began to spontaneously re-grow, and in 10 days, were totally normal! Today, the boy plays better with that hand than his other, unaffected hand.

May St. Luke, the great defender of Orthodoxy in these latter days, the wondrous healer of souls and bodies, the teacher, the hierarch, and the holy father, intercede with Christ for all of us! Amen!

